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SECURITY INFORMATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

3 April 1953

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 340

SUBJECT: [REDACTED] Discussion on 19 March 1953 of NIE-80,
25X1A5a1 "Communist Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action in
Korea through 1953."

Chairman of Consultants' Meeting

Consultants to Board of National Estimates

25X1A5a1 [REDACTED]

Board of National Estimates

25X1A5a1

25X1A5a1 [REDACTED]

Staff Members of Office of National Estimates

25X1A5a1 [REDACTED]

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The following were the principal questions discussed:

A. The importance of North Korea to Communist China and the USSR

1. It was generally agreed that NIE-80 (Preliminary text of 13 March 1953) placed insufficient emphasis on the historic and strategic importance of Korea in the determination of Soviet and Chinese objectives and courses of action in the Far East. There was also general agreement that Korea is, to the Communists, but one of a number of theaters of war and politics. A difference in view was evident, however, on the question of the value which Communist China and the USSR attach to the actual possession of territory in North Korea, [REDACTED] believing, to a

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greater degree than did [REDACTED], that the Communists place an extremely high value on the retention of North Korean territory, per se. [REDACTED] in particular felt that the Communists would not give up North Korea unless faced with general war, and stressed the importance of North Korea as a protective glacis for Manchuria. [REDACTED], however, believed that the Communists would probably give up North Korean territory lost in battle without too much strain and accept a rump North Korea, although they would probably thereafter admit of no diminution of Communist power north of the new line.

B. The POW question and Communist attitudes toward an armistice

2. No agreement was reached on the value the Communists attach to the POW question. [REDACTED] felt that the POW issue was a fundamental issue with the Communists, and that they could not permit the precedent of non-forcible repatriation to be established. If agreement on the POW question could be reached, said [REDACTED], an armistice would probably result. [REDACTED] shared this opinion, though not [REDACTED] degree of certainty. [REDACTED] was much more pessimistic about the possibility of achieving an armistice even if the POW issue were eliminated.

3. There was also a wide range of opinion on the question of the relative advantages and disadvantages to the Communists in containing the war. [REDACTED] felt that there were very strong considerations impelling the Communists to accept an armistice: (a) the drain of the Korean war upon Soviet resources; (b) the fact that Communist China's involvement in the war was highly embarrassing and unpleasant to the USSR; and (c) the fact that Communist China and the USSR do not enjoy having hostile and powerful US forces so close to their borders. [REDACTED] believed that the USSR had at times been very close to a decision for an armistice and that the present pro's and con's might be about equal. [REDACTED] agreed that the advantages and disadvantages were about even, but since at the present time there was little compulsion on the Communists to accept an armistice, the edge was probably toward continuing the war. [REDACTED] disagreed, stating that the Communists have probably not desired an armistice for some time, that there is even less reason for them to terminate the war now that they have built up their military strength in the area, and that their present tactics in Korea are probably a part of their policy of constant pressure everywhere in the world designed to wear away the resolution of the non-Communist powers.

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4. Neither was agreement reached on this question posed by
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"Would the Communists seek an armistice if faced with a major build-up of UN/US strength which was accompanied by convincing evidence in the Far East and within the US that we had the capability and determination to seek a military decision in Korea at any risk?"

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[REDACTED] answered "probably yes," [REDACTED] adding that the Communists would then put the question of Korea on ice for the future, and [REDACTED] adding that the Communist reaction might in large measure be influenced by whether or not we accompanied this build-up with an express ultimatum. [REDACTED] thought the proposition unrealistic under present conditions. [REDACTED] added that the Communists might say "go ahead; we beat the Japanese at this game once before." [REDACTED] thought that the most we could estimate was that the UN could not bring the Korean war to a close unless this build-up and determination were shown. That we would then possibly get an armistice, but that we might not, if global considerations dictated otherwise to the Communists.

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25X1A5a1 5. [REDACTED] added parenthetically his belief in the great importance of Japan to the Korean war. The achieving of an armistice in his opinion would in particular be aided if the US coupled bargaining over Japanese questions with its negotiations at Panmunjom. [REDACTED] felt that one of the considerations which perhaps lay back of the original Communist aggression in Korea in 1950 was that the US was at that time considering a separate peace with Japan.

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C. The extent to which the Korean war represents a drain upon Soviet resources

25X1A5a1 6. [REDACTED] repeatedly stated that the Korean war represented a much greater strain on Soviet resources than NIE-80 appeared to imply, and that the Soviet attitude toward continuing the war would be greatly influenced by the level of Chinese Communist military supply demands on the USSR. [REDACTED] added that he could not bring himself to accept EIC figures on such questions as the Trans-Siberian RR, that he thought it a "shrieking absurdity" to believe that the Soviets can ship the amount of goods over the Trans-Siberian that the EIC estimated, and that our

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representatives in Moscow generally feel that Washington analysts magnify their estimates of Soviet production and do not discount sufficiently for such factors as habitual Russian sloppiness. A lengthy discussion ensued in which [REDACTED], supported by [REDACTED], explained the magnitude of the analysis effort on such questions, the constant questioning of the analysts on their estimates, and the resulting necessity generally to rely on the results of the staff processes.

D. NIE-80 (preliminary draft of 13 March 1945) believed too static

7. [REDACTED], supported by [REDACTED], criticized the draft estimate for being cast too statically with respect to the advantages and disadvantages to the Communists of continuing the war. [REDACTED] believed it proper for an NIE to discuss such questions for the policy maker, but stated that the draft text conjured up a static picture of pro's and con's being considered by all-seeing Soviet officials. On the contrary, [REDACTED] said, the advantages and disadvantages of continuing the Korean war constantly change with changing circumstances, and Communist leadership is probably playing the Korean war by ear.

8. [REDACTED] also stated that the draft text of NIE-80, as many US estimates, gave an impression that the US was looking only at the immediate problem, in this instance Korea, and that the text implied an assumption that the US will not negotiate on the question of Korea and will introduce no new bargaining factors.

E. The use of the term "capabilities" in NIE-80

9. [REDACTED] objected to the use of "Communist capabilities" without reference to opposition on the part of UN/US forces.

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